

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-10 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-04 RSC-01 PRS-01 SPC-03 SS-20

USIA-15 ACDA-19 IO-14 NIC-01 SAJ-01 DRC-01 /139 W

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R 301055Z NOV 73

FM AMEMBASSY BONN

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8991

INFO AMEMBASSY LONDON

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY ROME

USMISSION EC BRUSSELS

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AMCONSUL BREMEN

AMCONSUL DUSSELDORF

AMCONSUL HAMBURG

AMCONSUL MUNICH

AMCONSUL STUTTGART

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINT, GW

SUBJECT: CDU CONVENTION, NOVEMBER 18-20: THE
PERSONALITIES

REF: BONN 16915

SUMMARY: ALTHOUGH THE OUTCOME OF THE CDU CONVENTION
MUST BE CONSIDERED A VICTORY FOR KOHL, MOST STILL FIND
IT DIFFICULT TO IMAGINE HIM AS A CHANCELLOR CANDIDATE.
IF ANYONE IS TO BE CONSIDERED 'HERO OF HAMBURG', IT
IS BIEDENKOPF. BUT CARSTENS' PERFORMANCE ALSO WAS
STRONG; STOLTENBERG, BY CONTRAST, AND KOEPLER AND BARZEL
WERE NOT VERY IMPRESSIVE. END SUMMARY.

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1. ALTHOUGH THE AGENDA OF THE CDU CONVENTION IN HAMBURG FOCUSED ON ISSUES AND NOT ON LEADERSHIP QUESTIONS, THE LATTER WERE FOREMOST IN THE MINDS OF MOST OBSERVERS AND DELEGATES. ATTENTION CENTERED ON HOW WELL THE NEW KOHL-BIEDENKOPF-CARSTENS LEADERSHIP WOULD ACQUIT ITSELF, AND ON WHICH PERSONALITY MIGHT SEEM LIKELY TO EMERGE AS AN EFFECTIVE PARTY LEADER AND ATTRACTIVE VOTE-GETTER IN THE 1976 ELECTIONS. THE CONVENTION DID NOT GIVE DEFINITIVE ANSWERS TO THESE QUESTIONS, AND HAD NOT BEEN EXPECTED TO. NEVERTHELESS, IT PROVIDED A GOOD PLATFORM FOR THE PRIME CONTENDERS TO TEST THEIR WINGS.

2. PARTY CHAIRMAN HELMUT KOHL PUT HIS LEADERSHIP ON THE LINE WHEN HE DECLARED THAT THE CONVENTION MUST APPROVE A--LATER DEFINED AS HIS--MITBESTIMMUNG MODEL BY A CONVINCING MAJORITY. THE DELEGATES DID JUST THAT. KOHL THUS PROVED THAT HE HAD CORRECTLY JUDGED THE VOTING BEHAVIOR OF THE DELEGATES. PERHAPS EVEN MORE IMPORTANTLY, HE OVERCAME HIS "1971 DUESSELDORF IMAGE"; HE STUCK TO HIS GUNS, REFUSED TO COMPROMISE, AND PUSHED HIS PROGRAM THROUGH.

3. BUT, KOHL'S "VICTORY" WAS A QUALIFIED ONE. A SIGNIFICANT NUMBER OF THOSE WHO SIDED WITH HIM ON THE MITBESTIMMUNG QUESTION DID SO BECAUSE THEY BELIEVED THAT THE CDU HAD TO TAKE A UNITED POSITION ON THIS ISSUE. THEY ALSO REALIZED THAT THE PARTY COULD NOT STAND ANOTHER LEADERSHIP CRISIS ONLY SIX MONTHS AFTER BARZEL'S RESIGNATION AND THAT THE TIME IS NOT RIPE FOR A MAJOR RESHUFFLING IN THE PARTY.

4. IN FACT, KOHL DID WELL, AND BETTER THAN MANY HAD EXPECTED. HE BEHAVED AS A PARTY LEADER AND MADE THE APPROPRIATE NOISES ABOUT AN "ALTERNATIVE PROGRAM" AND "PARTY UNITY". HE ASSUMED AN AGGRESSIVE POSTURE AND A DETERMINED STYLE.

5. YET SOMEHOW KOHL STILL DOES NOT SEEM TO "PULL IT OFF" AS A LEADER. HE STRIKES ONE AS RATHER DULL, HEAVY, AND SOMEWHAT STODGY. HE IS NOT A STIMULATING PUBLIC SPEAKER; HIS DELIVERY LACKS DYNAMISM AND HE HAS AN LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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UNFORTUNATELY POOR SENSE OF TIMING FOR AUDIENCE REACTION. HE OFTEN MISSES HIS OWN PUNCH LINES. THIS IS NOT TO SAY THAT HE IS NOT RESPECTED AS A BRIGHT AND ABLE POLITICIAN, BUT HIS IMAGE IS STILL THAT OF A SLOW AND COMFORTABLE, IF SMART, PROVINCIAL. ONE SENSED AT HAMBURG THAT PEOPLE ARE LOOKING TO SEE IF MAYBE THERE IS SOMEONE ELSE.

6. CARSTENS IS THE ONE PROBABLY MOST FREQUENTLY MENTIONED AS A POSSIBLE ALTERNATIVE TO KOHL, AND INDEED CARSTENS HAS THE POLISH, THE ELOQUENCE, AND THE REFINEMENT BOTH IN APPEARANCE AND STYLE WHICH KOHL LACKS. CARSTENS HAS BEEN MAKING GOOD USE OF HIS PLATFORM IN THE BUNDESTAG. AS A PUBLIC SPEAKER, HE IS IMPRESSIVE; HE SPEAKS WITH ELOQUENCE YET ALSO WITH PRECISION AND DECISIVENESS, AND ONE HAS THE IMPRESSION THAT HE SPEAKS WITH KNOWLEDGE AS WELL AS WITH CONVICTION. HIS

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CONVENTION STATEMENT CONTAINED LITTLE THAT WAS NEW, HOWEVER; NOT ONLY THE SAME PHRASES BUT ENTIRE PARAGRAPHS HAD BEEN HEARD BEFORE IN THE BUNDESTAG. IN GENERAL,

CARSTENS SEEMED TO BE MORE OR LESS WAITING THIS CONVENTION OUT. HE DID NOT ENGAGE HIMSELF IN THE SUBSTANTIVE DEBATES AND HELD HIMSELF ALOOF FROM THE MITBESTIMMUNG CONTROVERSY. HE RECEIVED A TREMENDOUS OVATION FOR HIS OPENING STATEMENT--MUCH GREATER THAN THAT GIVEN KOHL--AND KOHL REACTED WITH VISIBLE DISCOMFORT AND RESIGNATION, HIS FACE SHOWING MORE PLAINLY THAN WORDS THAT HE REGARDS CARSTENS AS A RIVAL. YET BY THE END OF THE CONVENTION, CARSTENS, HAVING CHOSEN QUITE UNDERSTANDABLY TO HOLD HIMSELF ON THE SIDELINES, HAD BEEN GREATLY OVERSHADOWED BY ONE WHO COULD NOT--KURT BIEDENKOPF.

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7. BIEDENKOPF WAS THE STAR OF THE CONVENTION. HE FOUGHT THE MITBESTIMMUNG BATTLE FOR KOHL, AND WON IT. HE BEGAN BY APOLOGIZING TO KATZER FOR HAVING QUESTIONED THE LATTER'S RATIONALE "IN THE HEAT OF DEBATE" EARLIER IN THE WEEK. THIS OBVIOUSLY NECESSARY BUT DIFFICULT GESTURE WAS DONE WITH SUCH GRACE AND SINCERITY THAT IT DISARMED THE OPPOSITION, SET THE TONE OF THE DEBATE, AND GAVE BIEDENKOPF A LARGE PERSONAL PLUS. HE SPOKE WELL, NOT ONLY ON MITBESTIMMUNG AND PARTY ORGANIZATIONAL MATTERS BUT ALSO ON THE MORE GENERAL ISSUE OF PARTY ORIENTATION. HIS STYLE WAS LOW KEY, HIS MANNER OPEN AND ENGAGING, AND HIS APPEARANCE ALMOST BOYISH. ONLY HIS OBVIOUS SUBSTANTIVE EXPERTISE BETRAYED HIS PROFESSORIAL CREDENTIALS. IF JUDGMENTS ARE TO BE MADE ON THE BASIS OF APPLAUSE RATINGS, BIEDENKOPF WON THE POPULARITY CONTEST AT HAMBURG.

8. AT THE SAME TIME, BIEDENKOPF AND KOHL WERE CLEARLY OPERATING HAND IN GLOVE, AND BIEDENKOPF DOES NOT GIVE THE IMPRESSION OF AT PRESENT SEEKING HIGHER THINGS. AS A LABOR-MANAGEMENT EXPERT, HIS CENTRAL ROLE AT A CONVENTION REVOLVING AROUND THE MITBESTIMMUNG ISSUE WAS ALMOST INEVITABLE. HIS MAJOR TASK NOW IS TO REVITALIZE THE PARTY ORGANIZATIONALLY, A ROLE WHICH WILL NOT NECESSARILY PUT HIM IN THE SPOTLIGHT.

9. CLEARLY EACH OF THE THREE LEADING FIGURES--KOHL, BIEDENKOPF, AND CARSTENS--HAS INCREASED IN STATURE OVER THE PAST SIX MONTHS, AND A VARIETY OF FACTORS OTHER THAN THE RECENT CONVENTION WILL TELL THE STORY OF THEIR FUTURE AND THEIR STANDING IN RELATION TO EACH OTHER. NOR CAN OTHERS SUCH AS STOLTENBERG AND PERHAPS KOEPLER BE COUNTED OUT; ALTHOUGH NEITHER PARTICULARLY DISTINGUISHED HIMSELF IN HAMBURG, THEIR FORTUNES AS WELL AS KOHL'S COULD RISE OR FALL IN COMING LAENDER ELECTIONS. BARZEL ALSO DOES NOT WANT TO BE FORGOTTEN, AS EVIDENCED

BY THE FACT THAT HE CHOSE TO SPEAK, PERHAPS UNWISELY
(REFTEL),IN HAMBURG.
HILLENBRAND

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